

***Montia diffusa* Nutt.**
branching montia
Portulacaceae (Purslane Family)

Status: State Sensitive

Rank: G4S2S3

General Description: Low spreading, branched annual often twice as broad as tall. Basal leaves are few and spatula-shaped; stem leaves are lanceolate and narrow abruptly to the petiole. The racemes are often in the axils of the foliage leaves and are clustered toward the branch ends. Sepals measure less than 1/5 in. (2 to 3 mm) and are unequal; the petals range from white to pale pink and are less than 1/3 in. (3 to 4 mm) long. There are 5 stamens. The capsule is 3-valved and contains black papillate seeds with a short, conical appendage.

Identification Tips: This non-rhizomatous, annual species is identifiable by its low-growing, branching appearance and its alternate spatula-shaped leaves.

Phenology: Flowers April through July.

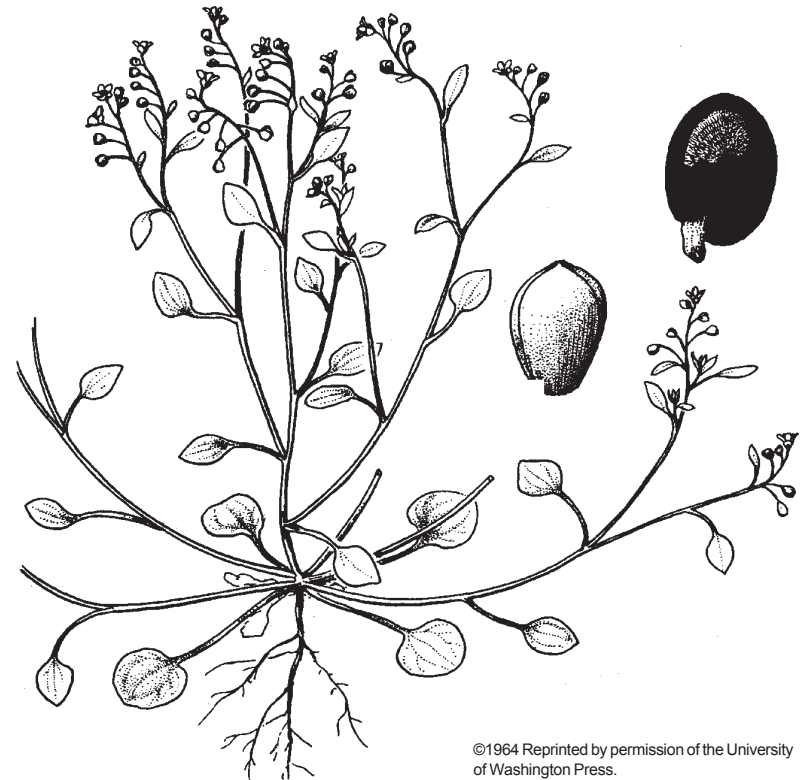
Range: Occurs mainly on the western side of the Cascades from southern British Columbia to Marin County, California. In Washington, it is currently known in Skamania, Snohomish, Clark, Kittitas, Skagit and Clallam counties. It is historically known from Gray's Harbor, Klickitat, Lewis, Pierce, Snohomish, and Clark counties.

Habitat: This species occurs in moist forests in the lowland and lower montane zones. It is occasionally located in xeric soil or disturbed sites. Associate species include Douglas fir (*Psuedotsuga menziesii*), ocean-spray (*Holodiscus discolor.*) and miner's lettuce (*Montia perfoliata*).

Ecology: The most common habitat for *M. diffusa* is open fir woodlands. However, branching montia can tolerate some degree of disturbance, including fire or logging activity, and is often found in such areas. Therefore, occurrences may exist in a wide variety of elevations and habitats except in those areas affected by severe burn.

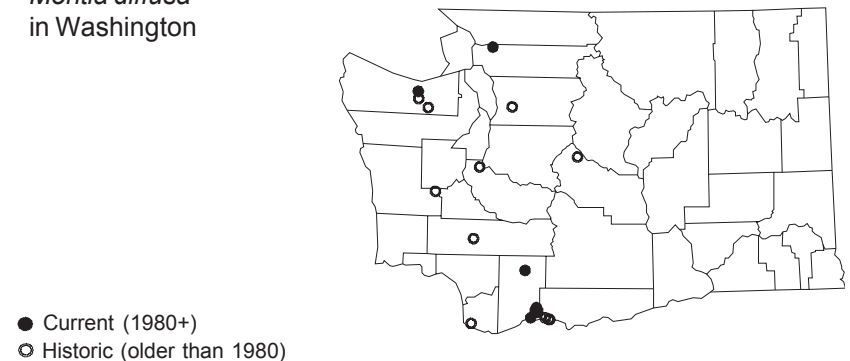
State Status Comments: *Montia diffusa* is scattered throughout Washington. The habitat is subject to disturbance by excessive timber harvest.

Montia diffusa
branching montia



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Illustration by Jeanne R. Janish

Known distribution of
Montia diffusa
in Washington



Montia diffusa
branching montia



Photo by John Gamon

Montia diffusa
branching montia

Inventory Needs: Historical sites should be revisited; additional inventory is needed throughout the range.

Threats and Management Concerns: Timber harvest, grazing, trampling, agriculture, competition with exotics, hydrologic change, and suburban and rural development pose the greatest threats to the species.

References:

- Hitchcock, C.L., A. Cronquist, M. Ownbey, and J.W. Thompson. 1964. *Vascular Plants of the Pacific Northwest, Part 2: Salicaceae to Saxifragaceae*. University of Washington Press, Seattle. 597 pp.
- Kemp, L., and T. Butler. *Mt. Hood National Forest Sensitive Plants and Noxious Weeds Field Guide*.
- Washington Natural Heritage Program. 1981. *An Illustrated Guide to the Endangered, Threatened and Sensitive Vascular Plants of Washington*. Washington State Department of Natural Resources. 328 pp.